

Understanding Crime Data

This section is provided to help readers interpret the data presented in the *2006 Denver Statistical Neighborhood Crime Report*. In addition to providing definitions of many of the terms used in the report, this document aides readers in thinking broadly about the nature of crime, in order to assess their own safety risks more effectively.

There are many good public sources of safety information. Content available on the Internet is expansive, and some excellent websites are listed below:

Crime Prevention tips

<http://www.ncpc.org/>

Safe City Programs

<http://denvergov.org/SafeCity/SafeCityPrograms/tabid/393561/Default.aspx>

Learn about Crimes against Children

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/crimesmain.htm>

Parent's Quick reference Card on Recognizing and Preventing Gang Involvement

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?Item=1383>

Go to Colorado's sex offender registry web site

<http://sor.state.co.us/>

Go to Denver's sex offender registry web site

<http://www.denvergov.org/denvermaps>

(click Public Safety, then Registered Sex Offenders)

Read about common community safety problems

<http://www.popcenter.org>

Demographic and Crime Statistics

<http://www.drco.org>

<http://www.census.gov/>

<http://www.piton.org/>

<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>

Assessing Neighborhood Safety

One reality of summary data like those included in the *2006 Denver Statistical Neighborhood Crime Report* is that the tables simply cannot communicate the whole story. Oftentimes, we can't discern the real nature of the crimes occurring in a particular neighborhood, such as the following:

- individual locations that disproportionately affect the rate of crime in a neighborhood, like a troublesome apartment complex or bar, as well as varied safety characteristics in different parts of the same neighborhood;
- significant changes in a neighborhood from one year to the next, like a dramatic change in population, widespread construction, or other factors that create or eliminate opportunities for crime to occur;
- unique characteristics of a neighborhood – such as the influx into Denver's Central Business District of workers during the day and entertainment-seekers at night– that distort the picture of crimes occurring in the area; and
- wide variation in population among statistical neighborhoods, making total crime figures hard to compare from neighborhood to neighborhood.

Readers of this report should consider the unique characteristics of their neighborhoods as they evaluate the meaning of the associated crime data. Then, they should ask themselves questions about their own housing, workplace, and behaviors to assess the impact of the neighborhood crime data on their own personal safety.

More information about crimes occurring in particular neighborhoods can be obtained by attending local neighborhood association meetings, which often include participation by neighborhood police officers who provide detailed information about crime and how best to avoid being a crime victim.

Dynamic Crime Data

In order to provide the most accurate crime information possible, reports published by the Safety Office of Police Analysis (SOPA) include the most up-to-date data drawn from Denver's crime databases. Although this policy has many advantages in terms of the quality of SOPA's reports, it also means that a report generated today often contains different data from the same report generated tomorrow (and could be significantly different than one generated a year ago, such as the tables included in the *2005 Denver Neighborhood Statistical Report*). This change is a result of the dynamic nature of crime data. Some of the reasons crime data change are as follows:

- An offense reported to the police is later determined not to have been a crime. These "unfounded" offense reports are then excluded from SOPA's reports.
- An offense reported to the police in one category is later determined to belong in a different category (for instance, if the victim of an aggravated assault dies, this crime may be reclassified as a homicide).

What Data Are Included?

Denver's crime data collection and reporting systems continue to evolve, and the Police Department is in the process of implementing a major new Records Management System (RMS) that will markedly improve the quality and availability of crime information. Over the years, the Police Department has continued to invest in the existing system in order to capture accurate information about the incidence of crime in Denver. Nevertheless, there are some areas in which the quality of current data collection does not match what will be achieved using the RMS. Furthermore, there are some realities of crime data that are described below to help the reader better understand the content of the *2006 Denver Statistical Neighborhood Crime Report*.

Crimes that Are Undercounted

Certain Part 2 crimes are captured more accurately than others, primarily due to the nature of the paperwork involved with these offenses. If a General Offense Report is not completed with respect to a particular crime, then that crime is usually not included in the system used to report crime rates in Denver. Crime types that often do not have General Offense Reports accompanying them are larceny, shoplifting, prostitution, simple assault, and misdemeanor drug offenses, criminal mischief, trespass, driving under the influence, and many juvenile offenses.

Police enforcement of these crimes is not limited in any way by this data systems issue, and correcting the matter is not a cost-effective investment of taxpayer resources, given the ongoing implementation of the new RMS. Completion of the RMS will result in full counting of these offenses. Readers of subsequent reports will need to understand that the increases in associated crime categories indicate a change in counting methodology, not necessarily a change in the crime rate.

Crimes Missing Location Information

Starting with the *2006 Denver Statistical Neighborhood Crime Report*, this report includes offenses that could not be mapped to a particular location in Denver – even offenses that may not have occurred in the City and County of Denver but were reported to the Denver Police Department. In prior years, any offense whose location could not be verified to be within the boundaries of Denver was excluded from the count in this report. These offenses are represented on the lists of neighborhoods by the category "Unknown."

Crimes not Reported to the Police

Crime data are dependent on individuals' decisions to involve the police by reporting the offenses. Reporting rates vary by crime type, just as the reasons for whether to report vary. Homicide is thought to be the most reported crime, as a percentage of the actual incidence of the crime. On the other hand, sexual assault is believed to be the most under-reported serious offense, with experts estimating that as few as 16% of sexual assault victims report the crime to the police. Other crimes are not reported because the victims do not believe the police can or will be able to solve them.¹ The crime rates described in this report are limited to those crimes reported to or identified by the Denver Police Department.

Census Data

The demographic data used to calculate crime rates were drawn from the Census 2000 data published by the United States Census Bureau. The decennial census data provides detailed information down to areas as small as city blocks. The Census Bureau periodically conducts an American Community Survey to provide more timely population for the years in between the decennial census; however, the data is provided for larger areas and does not provide the detail necessary to calculate crime rankings within the Denver statistical neighborhoods.

What's Different in 2006?

SOPA continues to revise its annual statistical neighborhood crime report. The most visible change in the 2006 report is the elimination of tables that provided duplicate information sorted various ways to meet different readers' requirements. This year's report includes more comprehensive citwide tables that are sorted in alphabetical order by neighborhood. Those wishing to sort or filter the information based on different criteria may choose to download the tables from the Department of Safety website, located at <http://www.denvergov.org/sopa>.

Inclusion of "Unknowns"

Another key difference in 2006 is the inclusion of crimes whose location cannot be mapped to a Denver address. This inability to map a particular crime could be due to incomplete or inaccurate address information on the offense report, or it could be because the crime did not actually occur in Denver, even though it was reported to the Denver Police Department.

New Summary Categories

The categories used by the FBI to report crime on a national basis are old, and in many ways they reflect only a portion of the crimes that people in the community perceive to represent neighborhood safety. For this reason, this report has always included the Part 1 crime categories described in the "Definitions" section below, as well as several Part 2 offenses. Starting in 2006, this report includes new categories to represent Part 2 offenses in logical groups, including Other Crimes against Persons, Public Disorder Crimes, Drug and Alcohol Offenses, White Collar Crimes, and All Other Crimes. The offenses included in these categories are listed in the "Definitions" section, below.

Theft from Motor Vehicle

The FBI's definition of larceny is very broad, including many types of theft, among them shoplifting and theft from motor vehicles. Because both the victims and nature of these crimes

¹ Calling the police to report a crime helps the Department know where crime is occurring. With the benefit of this citizen input, the DPD can better identify where to deploy officers for directed patrol activities, what strategies to use to prevent known crime patterns from expanding, and how better to catch offenders who are perpetrating these crimes. In an emergency, dial 9-1-1. If the situation is non-life-threatening, use the Police non-emergency number, (720) 913-2000.

can be very different, this report for the first time separates thefts from motor vehicles from the rest of the larceny category in the Detail by Neighborhood section. The “2006 Summary” section continues to report larceny based on the traditional FBI definition for the basis of comparison with other reporting agencies.

Definitions

The Federal Bureau of Information established Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) standards in order to collect crime information from municipalities across the United States and effectively compare crime rates among the nation’s cities.

Part 1 Crimes

Traditional UCR guidelines track eight “Index Crimes,” known also as Part 1 crimes. The UCR system includes crimes that are most likely to be reported to the police and to occur with sufficient frequency to provide an adequate basis for comparison. Part 1 crime definitions are listed below:

Table 1-A: Part 1 Crimes against Persons (Violent Crime)	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Homicide	<p>Homicide includes the offenses of Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter and is the willful killing of one human being by another. As a general rule, any death due to injuries received in a fight, argument, quarrel, assault, or commission of a crime is counted as a Homicide. The definition of Homicide excludes the following situations: deaths caused by negligence, suicide, or accident; justifiable homicides; and attempts to murder or assaults to murder, which are counted as Aggravated Assaults.</p> <p>It is important to note that Homicides are counted based on the specific circumstances of the incidents, not on the criminal charges filed as a result of those incidents. For instance, situations where a victim dies of a heart attack as the result of a robbery or witnessing a crime do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Homicide classification.</p>
Sexual Assault	<p>Sex Assault includes only Forcible Rape, which is the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Assaults with attempt to commit rape, and other attempts to commit rape by force or threat of force, are also included; however, statutory rape (without force) and other sex offenses are excluded. Sexual attacks on males are counted as Aggravated Assaults or other sex offenses, depending on the circumstances and the extent of any injuries.</p>
Robbery	<p>Robbery is the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear.</p>
Aggravated Assault	<p>Aggravated Assault is the unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. Aggravated Assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by other means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. An attempted Aggravated Assault that involves the display of—or threat to use—a gun, knife, or other weapon is included in this crime category, because serious personal injury would likely result if the assault were completed.</p>

Table 1-B: Part 1 Property Crimes	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Burglary	Burglary is the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft. The use of force to gain entry is not required to classify an offense as a burglary.
Larceny (and Theft from Motor Vehicle)	Larceny is the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another; attempts to do these acts are included in the definition. This crime category includes shoplifting, pocket-picking, purse-snatching, bicycle thefts, and so forth, in which no use of force, violence, or fraud occurs. Excluded from Larceny are Auto Theft and crimes that involve Embezzlement, confidence games, Forgery, and worthless checks, which are classified in separate offense categories. Theft from Motor Vehicle is the theft of articles from a motor vehicle, whether locked or unlocked, or the theft of any part or accessory affixed to the interior or exterior of a motor vehicle in a manner that would make the item an attachment of the vehicle or necessary for its operation.
Auto Theft	Auto Theft is the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. The offense includes the stealing of automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, snowmobiles, etc. The taking of a motor vehicle for temporary use by persons having lawful access is excluded from this definition.
Arson	Arson is the willful or malicious burning or attempting to burn, with or without intent to defraud, a house, public building, motor vehicle or aircraft, personal property of another, etc.

Part 2 Crimes

The Part 1 crimes represent approximately two-thirds of all crimes reported in Denver, although this portion varies over time. The definitions for the other crimes, called Part 2 crimes, are listed in the following tables.

Table 2-A: Other Crimes against Persons	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Other Assault	Other Assault includes assaults and attempted assaults which are not of an aggravated nature and do not result in serious injury to the victim.
Sex Offenses	Sex Offenses include statutory rape and offenses against chastity, common decency, morals, and the like. Attempts are included. Excluded from this category are Sex Assault and Prostitution and Commercialized Vice.
Offenses against the Family and Children	Offenses Against the Family and Children are unlawful, nonviolent acts by a family member (or legal guardian) that threaten the physical, mental, or economic well-being or morals of another family member and that are not classifiable as other offenses, such as Sex Assault, Other Assault or Sex Offenses. Attempts are included.

Table 2-B: Public Disorder Crimes	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Criminal Mischief	Vandalism involves acts that willfully or maliciously destroy, injure, disfigure, or deface any public or private property, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control by cutting, tearing, breaking, marking, painting, drawing, covering with filth, or any other such means as may be specified by local law. Attempts are included. Graffiti is a form of Vandalism.
Prostitution and Commercialized Vice	Prostitution and Commercialized Vice include the unlawful promotion of or participation in sexual activities for profit, including attempts.
Drunkenness	Drunkenness is to drink alcoholic beverages to the extent that one's mental faculties and physical coordination are substantially impaired. Excludes Driving Under the Influence.
Disorderly Conduct	Disorderly conduct is any behavior that tends to disturb the public peace or decorum, scandalize the community, or shock the public sense of morality.
Vagrancy	Vagrancy is the violation of a court order, regulation, ordinance, or law requiring the withdrawal of persons from the streets or other specified areas; prohibiting persons from remaining in an area or place in an idle or aimless manner; or prohibiting persons from going from place to place without visible means of support.
Curfew and Loitering	Curfew and Loitering offenses involve violations by juveniles of local curfew or loitering ordinances.

Table 2-C: Drug and Alcohol Offenses	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Drug Abuse Violations	Drug Abuse Violations include the production (cultivation and/or manufacture), transportation or importation, distribution or sale, purchase, possession, or use of any controlled drug or narcotic substance. The following drug categories are specified: opium or cocaine and their derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine); marijuana; synthetic narcotics – manufactured narcotics that can cause true addiction (Demerol, methadone); and dangerous non-narcotic drugs (barbiturates, Benzedrine).
Liquor Law Offenses	Liquor Law Offenses include the unlawful manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation, possession, or use of alcoholic beverages, not including Driving Under the Influence and Drunkenness. Federal violations are also excluded.

Table 2-D: White Collar Crimes	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Forgery and Counterfeiting	Forgery and Counterfeiting involve the altering, copying, or imitating of something, without authority or right, with the intent to deceive or defraud by passing the copy or thing altered or imitated as if it were original or genuine; or the selling, buying, or possession of an altered, copied, or imitated thing with the intent to deceive or defraud. Attempts are included.
Fraud	Fraud is the intentional perversion of the truth for the purpose of inducing another person or other entity in reliance upon it to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right. This offense includes the fraudulent conversion and obtaining of money or property by false pretenses. Confidence games and bad checks, except forgeries and counterfeiting, are included.
Embezzlement	Embezzlement is the unlawful misappropriation or misapplication by an offender to his/her own use or purpose of money, property, or some other thing of value entrusted to his/her care, custody, or control.

Table 2-E: All Other Crimes	
CRIME	DEFINITION
Weapons Offenses	Weapons offenses include the violation of laws or ordinances prohibiting the manufacture, sale, purchase, transportation, possession, concealment, or use of firearms, cutting instruments, explosives, incendiary devices, or other deadly weapons. Attempts are included.
Stolen Property	Stolen Property Offenses include the buying, receiving, possessing, selling, concealing, or transporting of any property with the knowledge that it has been unlawfully taken, as by Burglary, Embezzlement, Fraud, Larceny, Robbery, etc. Attempts are included.
All Other Offenses	All Other Offenses include any violations of state or local laws not otherwise specifically identified (and not a Part 1 Offense or Part 2 Offense), except traffic violations.